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AMERICA AND ENGLAND IN THE EAST.

BY THE RIGHT HONORABLE SIR CHARLES W. DILKE, BART., M. P.

I HAVE been asked an interesting series of questions on behalf of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, questions, I may add, which, like many others, are easier to ask than to answer. It is suggested that there may be some doubt as to "how far England can allow America to advance in the Far East, either commercially or territorially," a question to which the flippant answer might be made that Great Britain can hardly prevent the advance in the Far East of the United States, a Power which, if thwarted either in commercial or in territorial projects, in China, for example, could easily make terms with Russia, ever anxious to obtain her support.

It is shown to me, and, of course, there can be no doubt about the fact, that "America has rapidly growing mercantile interests in China," and that at no former time have the moneyed interests of two nations intermingled to such an extent as is the case with those of the United Kingdom and the United States in China—a country foreign to both. I am, however, asked, "can these two nations, however similar in habits and customs, but owing allegiance to dissimilar principles of government, feel sure their interests will not some day clash?"

It is difficult to deal with the indefinite postponement of dangerous questions involved in the phrase "some day." But I think it can be shown that any dissimilarity between the conservative Republicanism of the United States, and the democratic Constitutionalism of the United Kingdom, is not likely in itself to produce conflict, and that there is no reason to suppose that the interests of the United Kingdom and of the United States in China are more likely to clash than is the case with any commercial

interests in the world. Dissimilar principles of government, when the balance is redressed by the intense Toryism of the American republican mind, and the greater openness to socialistic experiment of the mind of the Constitutional Monarchists of the mother country, are not a probable cause of conflict. The question of the treatment of Ireland by Great Britain, and the consequent estrangement from British policy of a vast number of voters in the United States, form a much more practical issue. But it is idle for those of us who desire, in the interest of England, a considerable change in the constitutional relations of the principal parts of the United Kingdom, to shut our eyes to the fact that appeasement of Irish sentiment has rendered this difficulty between us and the United States less formidable for a time than it has been in the past or may possibly be again in the future.

What do we mean by the growing mercantile interests of the United States in the Far East; by the intermingling of those interests with British interests, and by the suggested fear that these interests may one day clash? The producers of the United States, with an unrivalled combination of coal, the metals, invention, and skilled labor at their back, will need to send their produce to customers in other portions of the world. The United States will undoubtedly want to send steel and machinery, as well as many other commodities that might be mentioned, to India and to China, and to receive from India and China and Ceylon tea and silk and other articles which the territory of the United States does not produce, or fails to produce in sufficient quantity for American consumption. Although India and China are beginning to work cotton, yet it is probable that even in some classes of cotton goods the United States will find a market in India and in China, and for these purposes she needs the open door—equality of opportunity for her trade, as we need it for our own. No territorial expansion of the United States which seems probable or even possible would do away with this necessity.

It seems wholly forgotten that the relations of the United Kingdom and of the United States, in matters deeply concerning the trade of the former, were greatly threatened a few years ago in a different quarter of the world from that which is now under consideration. When Mr. Blaine called the Pan-American Congress, it was supposed by the great South American States that his object was to establish the commercial dominance of the United

States over Central and South America. Great Britain sends to these States about twenty-three millions' sterling, worth of her produce every year, and some of them (Venezuela, for example) are, proportionately to their population, much greater consumers of her goods than are her own colonies. British trade appeared to be threatened by the Congress over which Mr. Blaine presided, for, though nothing came of it, that was by no means the expectation entertained in England when the Congress met. Yet no ill-feeling was displayed, no anxiety, no alarm; and the fact that there exists in Great Britain a real friendliness toward the United States, which prevents unpleasant excitement on such occasions, such as would be aroused by similar action on the part of Russia, of Germany, or of France, is a fact which we must not neglect, and which renders not only the discussion but the settlement of such difficulties as we are considering much more easy. Why should matters be worse in Asia than, at a time of far less friendly relations, they proved to be in the Central and South American case?

It is in view of similarities of position, which ought to produce a similarity of policy in China between Great Britain and the United States, that Lord Charles Beresford was led to make speech after speech in the Treaty Ports of China, and in the United States on his way home from a mission which has wrongly been supposed to be official, but which is none the less interesting, in defence of a policy of alliance in China between the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, and Japan. There can be no doubt that any British Minister would be prepared to go forward in an active China policy if he were sure of the company of the three Powers named. If no such action has as yet been taken, it must be because there has been no sign on the part of those Powers of any desire to commit themselves in this direction, but opinion in the United States is no doubt ripening upon Asiatic questions. The expansion feeling, which has caused the United States, instead of setting up a nominal protectorate of the Philippines, to take steps which must lead to a virtual annexation of the islands certainly not contemplated at the beginning of the war, is not the same movement as one which is leading to active interest in the affairs of China, but it is a sign of the development of opinion upon somewhat the same lines. Those who desire that the United States should depart from an attitude of neutrality in China, and who have in view diplomatic co-operation with our-

selves to prevent American commercial interests in China being impaired by the encroachment of other Powers, will be as little annexationist in China as we English are. They will see American advantage, as we see British advantage, in the integrity, if not of China as a whole, at all events of China as a Treaty Power. They will, in the first place, desire to retain trading rights throughout the Chinese Empire, and, even if Germany is forced by her European relations with Russia to maintain an attitude of reserve, a British Minister would be justified in maintaining in concert with the United States and with Japan, or, if Japan were too frightened of her great neighbor to move at all, with the United States alone, an active policy in China. Japan has marked out her sphere opposite to Formosa and south of the Yangtse Valley. She is there a long way from the French, from whom our position at Hong Kong protects her. She is cut off from the Russian sphere by the whole of Central China and the great Valley of the Yangtse. Supposing the open-door policy to fail, is the United States likely to go with us in substituting the policy of spheres of interest or of influence or even of concessions? The feeling in England would support a Minister who in this event would adopt the Central Valley of the Yangtse as the joint Anglo-American sphere, instead of one purely British.

Our policy at the difficult moment of the seizure of a province by Germany and the seizure of Port Arthur by Russia is not defensible as a whole. The Government now, however, seem, in commercial phrase, to have "cut their loss," and to have decided that, although a province is gone to Germany beyond recall, an island to France, and Manchuria to Russia, as regards the rest of China, its integrity for the present can be preserved by agreement with Russia and Germany, and the door left open at all events in the more valuable portions of the country. The promise to ourselves with regard to the Yangtse, which is vague, and means little, will be left to slumber; the promise to the French as to the three southern provinces, which is wholly inadmissible by us, inasmuch as one of those three provinces—Yunnan—concerns us far more than it does the French, and adjoins Burma along a far greater portion of its frontier than it does Tonquin, will slumber along with the Yangtse promise and the promise to the Japanese. The Italian demand will be restricted to a mere coaling station upon a bay. The ministers of the Powers must, however, work

together at Pekin as firmly and as loyally as they did in the days when Mr. Anson Burlingame (formerly Senator for New York, and afterwards first Chinese Ambassador to the European Courts) was American Minister, and arranged with Sir F. Bruce and General Vlangaly the policy of co-operation at Pekin which for some years was perfectly applied in practice by all the Powers.

The particular point to which British policy at Pekin is being specially directed, is that which the Government have called the discouragement of all preferences and exclusive privileges to foreign Powers in China generally; and this is a policy in which the United States as a future exporter of railway iron and of locomotives has an enormous interest.

The questions which were put to me on behalf of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW went on, after those which I have discussed and tried to answer, to suggest that the day must come when the United Kingdom and the United States or Russia must become finally dominant in China. But surely this lies too far ahead for any but the speculative philosopher. The politicians or the statesmen of this country and of the United States have to deal with the matters which will be pressing in their own lives, and all that they can do with the future is not to unnecessarily give up points which may embarrass their successors. Russia must advance in China by mere weight; but the rate of that advance is a very different matter and depends largely upon the prudence of her rulers. In the meantime, great Anglo-American interests may have grown up, entwined together in the heart of China, and may lead ultimately to a partition between Russia in the north, and an English-speaking community in the centre, in which Australia, as well as the United States and the United Kingdom, will be heard, for Australian capital will play a part in the Pacific. When I am asked, as I have been, whether China is not more vital to ourselves, on account of our possession of the Indian Empire, than it ever can be to the United States, I must answer that the connection between China and the Indian Empire is somewhat shadowy and vague. India has her natural frontiers. She is cut off from China by great mountain ranges, and even her extension into Burma is not one which is likely to bring about much land trade between China and the Province of Burma, on account of the difficulty of the intervening country, and the advantage of sea-carriage over that by land. The interest of Russia in Northern

China is to India somewhat of a safety valve, giving Russia an ample feeding ground for her ambitions, and tending to prevent her from undertaking the adventure which would be involved in the gradual absorption of portions of Afghanistan, with a view to the attempt to destroy in India a British Government, which, in the course of time, the British colonies will be interested in helping to defend.

I have tried to view the situation largely through American spectacles. I do not believe that even the new interest of the United States in the Philippines and the foreign trade of that Archipelago, and even the increase of her fleet, will lead to American intervention in Chinese affairs on sentimental grounds, or any grounds except a local American interest in China; but that interest seems to me to be there. I think it identical with our own, and likely to lead, if we do nothing to wound American feeling, to co-operation, which, if it is real, will never need to be otherwise than peaceful between the Powers in the Yangtse Valley and at Peking.

CHARLES W. DILKE.